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The Ethnographic Edge

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The Ethnographic Edge

'What [I] Talk about when [I] am Running': Revetment Running, Ethnography and Econarratological Poetry

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Introduction

'Non-human' Noise

Wind vibrating like flaccid drumskin

Headset-creak

pant

sniff

Sound from train

delighted screams from children

puff, sigh

sigh, sniff

Wind vibrating like flaccid drumskin

Inaudible because of wind

sniff

sniff

inaudible

sniff

pant

gives a laugh

pitch goes up

Sound from motorcycle

stumbles

pitch goes up

sniff

sigh

sound from putative Asian language; a man and a woman sit on the fixed sun loungers

stark noise from waves

inaudible

laughter

laughter

pant

pant

pant

pant

sniff

inaudible



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cries of seagulls

panting

Breathing heavily for a few seconds – (The revetments of Town X, 160328)

Whence comes poetry and where does a story begin? On a dark and stormy night? On the edge of where the ocean meets the land? With words? In people? In culture? In the mind? In the voice? In the body? In nature? We already know that the humanities are obsessed with stories, but could laboratory science be seen as a sort of story-telling? And in such a case, would it be possible to follow these two widely differing knowledge-producing assemblages and still be able to frame a story convincingly and coherently? Or is coherence overestimated when it comes to stories? Must we still be able to tell or listen to a story? If we move while a story is being told, how do the movements affect the story? Can nature and environmental surroundings produce stories, or can they only be ascribed meaning by human subjects? And what about poetry, is that another story? The poem above was composed from utterances I made and recorded while running on revetments, i.e. seawalls of boulders constructed to prevent erosion, or more correctly from the things in my recordings and transcriptions that I didn't say.

The purpose of this essay is to discuss, explore and co-produce poetry with and by non-human agents, with a minimal interference from, or at least consciousness about, a pure human subjectivity. By furnishing an intersection between arts-based research in ethnography, posthumanism and cultural geography, and by means of econarratology, the present inquiry aims to inform the ethnographic discussion of how to expand the understanding of both the subject(s) and research process of ethnography.

In accordance with Michel Serres's (Serres & Latour, 1995) clarion call, this essay offers a bridging of the gap between science and the humanities, by extracting stories and poetry from an experiment (Author, 2016) in which culture/nature, human/nonhuman, word/world, subject/object, mind/body, humanities/science were mustered, renegotiated, and redefined. The strophes above comprise one of the four poems that the present inquiry resulted in. Below, their emergence—their *poesis*, even—will be unfolded, a discussion that is concluded with the complete set of poems.

In conversation with Bruno Latour, Serres (Serres & Latour, 1995) calls for an 'instructed third', by which he means a person versed as well in the natural and social sciences as in the humanities. This subject will find beauty and myth in science and rigor in poetry and stories. This would amount to retaining all the creative dimensions of modern man and her techno-scientific skills: 'Their daring, their research, their innovativeness, their tinkering, their youthful excesses ... all these are features we want to keep' (Latour, 1993, 133). Rinehart and Kidd (2017) suggest that by exploring arts-based methods, ethnography could serve as a methodological nexus, an interface between science and the humanities. The key here is to treat poetry as a rigorous form of demonstration and to elevate a broad definition of subjectivity that makes it possible for marginalized groups to enhance their actor- and authorship. In my inquiry, the marginalized are no less than the most ominous Others of them all: the non-humans. And although we, perhaps, might never be able to become any form of Other, we 'can at least, stand next to one another, [and] perhaps converse or 'tickle'' (Sydnor, 2017, 30, using Seligman et al. 2008, example, 73–74, 77–78, 84, 94).

The non-human turn in academia has taught us about affects, bodies, materialities and prediscursive strategies of accessing the world, in order to downplay the weight of words and language (cf. Deleuze and Guattari; 1987; Latour, 1993; Barad, 2007, Serres, 2007). But, as ethnographers, we cannot avoid words, since we cannot show without telling. Is it, then, an aporia that the subject of ethnography is precisely that, namely subjects? Conversely, Rinehart and Kidd (2017, 2), in their editorial of the inaugural issue of *The Ethnographic Edge*, suggest that, in times of both dehumanizing market liberalism and so-called post-truths, the re-insertion of the subject is one of the most decisive contributions of ethnography, but not without expanding what subjectivity might mean: *Whether the*

subject is human, post-human, other living animal, or even, certainly, vegetative life form, acknowledgement of its subjectivity is crucial to our project.

Firstly, I will dwell on the perspectives, strands and fields of knowledge (posthumanism, cultural geography, ethnography and poetry) of the project and also the locus (breakwater structures) of the experiment. Secondly, I will present the theoretical point of departure that could harness the perspectives from the first section by turning to ‘econarratology’, and then a summary of the results and conclusions from the experiment, which have been published elsewhere, will follow (Author, 2016). Thirdly, and finally, the poetry created in the experiment is presented.

The Autobiography of a Moving Amphibian and the Ethnography ‘to be’

All my life, I have run on the revetments (breakwater structures composed of big boulders in urban coastal areas) of my hometown, and for almost ten years I, as a posthumanist philosopher of movement, have been thinking about such structures systematically. Posthumanist and new materialist theories enable a perspective on and of the world that questions dichotomous constructions such as nature and culture (Latour, 1993). Such extrapolations of the world drive wedges between humanity and the rest of existence. My thesis is that revetments could be seen—as well metaphorically and metonymically, as empirically and ontologically—as such a wedge; one that reveals the edge between those realms and one that, thus, qualifies as a ‘strategic vantage-point’ (Murdoch, 2006, 97). I chose to place my experiment on breakwater structures, which fulfilled the requirements of such a strategic vantage point in several regards, of which I will discuss the ontological aspects in what follows. After that, I will turn to the epistemological and methodological concerns, which, certainly and inevitably, are related to the ontological ones.

Nowhere is the border between nature and culture more clearly discernible than that between land and sea. All such areas are contested and hazardous places, in which humans seldom dwell. In her musings on the deltas of Bangalore, cultural geographer Kuntala Lahiri-Dutt (2014) makes two claims about this edge in relation to her discipline: the primacy of earth, soil and mainland in geography and the inextricable entanglement of nature with culture. It is called earth, not water, mind you. And earth is our abode, as this mainland primacy concerns ethnography too. If geography is the writing of earth, ethnography is the writing of earthlings. More so, since, during the last decades, the affinity between ethnography and cultural geography has become stronger. Ethnography has become a pivotal method in cultural geography, and ethnographers have been keen to explore the material aspects of where and how people live, which are decidedly cultural geographical issues. This begs the question: is ethnography primarily oriented toward the mainland? One is inclined to believe so. Could we perhaps talk of ethnography as ‘earthnography’?

Curiously, the primacy of earth in geography is reversed in posthumanism, where water is the element *par preference*. Ian Bogost (2010) has coined the mildly derogatory moniker ‘firehose metaphysics’ for philosophies focusing on *process*, such as posthumanism. Emphasizing process, becoming and flow exclusively, can, according to Bogost, be misleading and make one overlook the mechanisms and procedures channeling the flow. This position, from which both process and mechanism could be discerned, is related to the idea of the human being as an amphibian. ‘The human being’, says René ten Bos (2009, 74), by way of philosopher Peter Sloterdijk,

is a moving animal which longs to change elements and to go somewhere else. It is an ontological amphibian. As such, it never sticks to just one environment (eg [sic!] earth, the mainland) but experiences a profound involvement with other environments as well.

How could this ambiguity, this continuous transgression be evoked? Evocative ethnography (Ellis & Bochner, 2006) is a bastard in the anthropological/ethnological family which has proven very productive and creative in its summoning of complex feelings. Often in a mild tone, but with a provocative, compromising or intimidating content, this ethnographic strand has transferred its public to sundry dire straits of human culture. In lay terms, evocative ethnography, oftentimes used interchangeably with

autoethnography, could be described as a writing of the intense here and now. Since this project was designed to explore non-human subjectivity, I needed tools that could translate the intense here and now from other entities than human beings, which are the usual suspects/subjects of evocative ethnography. What this might bring with it will surface in the next section. In the meantime, I would like to direct focus toward the above quote, in which ten Bos points toward movement as a prerequisite for becoming an Amphibian. Amphibians can move and long to do so.

Focusing movement could be a fruitful strategy for harnessing the creative and productive qualities of process, becoming and flows, without drowning in the vibrant cascades, which Bogost warns us about. Movement, and its rather neglected sibling, displacement, is thus placed at the heart of the experiment. In movement, humanhood could be side-stepped, at least the narrow understanding of humans that has been influential since science replaced religion. Humanity, says Serres, doesn't derive its identity 'from any biological or psychological particularity ... such as rationality or bipedalism' (Watkin, 2015, 172). Such particularities are challenged when moving on an uneven surface. Rationality and intentionality are set aside since reflexes and muscle memory take over in order to protect the 'moving animal'. Free will is set aside when the choice to enter the area is made and executed. Concerning bipedalism, hands must constantly balance the jerky movement and are thus often drawn to rocks next to the moving residents of revetments. This results in a gait that also strips the once *human* body of its humanness, turning bipedalism to both tri- and quadrupedalism. Thus, revetments could be seen as especially suitable for hi-jacking the human *logos*. While discarding traits of the *logos*, such as free will, intentions and rationality, we would still want to retain speech. For to treat speech as a part of the human body, rather than a discursive medium, could be a way to 'press away the poison and extract the honey,' to put it in the words of Bruno Latour (1999, 258).

Language, seen thus, is primarily 'affective', which in the case of the moving talking animal on revetments would translate to: a bodily faculty dependent on the surroundings. Recent advances in the social study of sport and movement cultures (cf. Markula, 2006; Pink, 2011; Booth, 2014) pose the exact same questions: how do the surroundings and their materiality affect the cultural creature in motion? In his methodological considerations of how to enact the affective, even poetic, qualities of surfing, sport historian Douglas Booth refers to the surfer journalist Mike McGinty who 'says that he doesn't need "paper and ink" to capture the affects of surfing; he needs "elongated vowel sounds and exaggerated hand movements".' (Booth 2012, 14). So, if affective language (both verbal and gestural) evokes movement that in itself is evoked from the constant re-composition of the surroundings, this could bring us closer to the world. Synthia Sydnor (2017) talks of the task and vow of ethnography as one of intimacy. Ethnography can bring us closer, infinitely, and is, without being utopian, in Sydnor's vision, a herald of hope.

Prefacing/valuing wonder and hope (or concomitantly "fascination and sadness" (Mohaghegh 2015, 261)) instead of analysis, critique, interpretation and/or political meaning; a going elsewhere that can't capture reality or move us toward utopia, but feasibly conjures an infinite ethnography "to be" (similar to Seligman et al. "as if"/subjunctive). A dancing next to, or with one another, but by no means as one fused body/group/tribe/nation (as in Seligman's dance analogy and model of ritual) may temper modern goals of resolution, solution or melding. Life's purpose may be life/living and/or creativity (Boyd 2009, 414); ethnography's purpose can be hope. (Sydnor, 2017, 30)

Suitably for the purposes of present inquiry, Sydnor utilizes similes of movement ('a going elsewhere'; 'a dancing next to') in her outlining of an infinite ethnography "to be". And here emerges a slight contradiction, for isn't the journalist in Booth's study who talked of capturing affects with other expressions than the common tongue, challenged by Sydnor's urge for a position in which we wouldn't be able 'to capture reality'? Not necessarily. Following Rinehart and Kidds' (2017, 2) rejection of 'the

claims of the right that everything we disagree with must be false', another stance is made possible. Both the surfer journalist and the dancing ethnographer long for the proximity of the other. The solution is found in the constant movement towards that intimate proximity where we could be close enough that we can 'tickle' each other, or gently caress the cheek of a stranger. And this solution is not a dissolution. I never wanted to meld with rocks; instead I strove to tread as lightly as possible in order to pass by them, and in order to listen to their story, but without getting harmed. An infinite ethnography 'to be' is just this. The way I approached the rocks is how I see ethnography, with the exception, of course, that I would never run on people.

Econarratology and the Experiment of Exploring Subjectivities of the Body in Motion

According to Michel Serres, the story of man is only a perturbation of *Nature's* own grand story. In other words, we as humans cannot avoid being spokespersons for nature and the universe. But, says Watkin (2015, 174), 'the Great Story is not simply about nature, but recounted by nature'. 'The world', he continues, 'does not mutely wait for the advent of humanity in order to tell its story; things speak for themselves and write about themselves, performatively speak out their autobiography' (175). The resonance here with evocative/suggestive/auto-ethnography is striking. In my case, I tried to make 'things speak for themselves' by analyzing how my voice, cadence, grammar and style changed in relation to my surroundings while running. This enabled me to furnish three different subjectivities emerging from talkative movement in the coarse terrain of revetments: *the subject, the project and the interject*.

By taking an 'econarratological' (Watkin, 2015) approach, the posthumanist conundrum of how — someone identifying as human—could give voice to nonhuman actors might be resolved. Thus, I endeavored to access what Michel Serres (Watkin, 2015) has coined *Le Grand Recit*: the Grand Narrative/Story. This story is told without linearity, in stark contrast to the way modern human subjects are used to produce and consume their stories. Instead, it unravels from narrative traces when such surfaces are born (which is exactly what the word nature denotes): the advents of man, carbon-based life-forms, planets, and the Big Bang. Language, words and stories aren't, in other words—literally, with other words; or rather, without other words— exclusive to human beings. This doesn't mean that we humans are cut off from this immense tale. We are just one small late-coming theme; a panting in the cosmic tale, but not one detached, since our 'language did not emerge *ex nihilo* in the Story' (Watkin 2015:174). Conversely, according to this perspective, human language is rooted in the rhythms and noises of the natural world.

But what would this mean to ethnography? Language is to us, the articulators of the humane, the means of getting access to other people's interiorities, and also the way in which we disseminate what these people say and do. Ethnographers are ventriloquists of sundry tribes and gatherings. And there are other reasons for this analogy to be curious and productive. According to Watkin and Serres, human beings, all too often, act as ventriloquists for the non-human realm, i.e. nature, through science or environmental concerns: The planet is an eco-system; the planet isn't well. Human scientists and environmentalists risk reproducing what they strive to critique by treating the non-human realm as a fiefdom of its own, one in which actors are mute and fully dependent on humanity to define and ascribe meaning to them. By projecting a quaint, pastoral view of an innocent nature that human beings taint, we miss the point that we are enmeshed *with* things, animals and plants. Thus, only conservation is possible, when conversation is what is needed.

So, avoiding ventriloquism is one thing, but what can we do then, to discern nature's storytelling and poetry? Serres's move here is to turn to what he calls 'econarrativity', which, according to Watkin (105, 171) could be understood as the basis for 'a new non-anthropocentric humanism', which seems to harmonize with the abovementioned urge to reinsert the subject into ethnographic research and to widen the scope of what subjectivity might mean. But neither should we try to mimic nature, a stance which Watkin refers to as eco-mimesis, when we practice nature-writing.

Before any act of ecomimesis, and as its condition of possibility, there is an irreducible and non-binary participation of the 'subject' and 'language' in the world they conspire to imitate. Ecomimesis always comes to the party second, behind a more fundamental ecomethexis: I participate in (am a part of) the world before I imitate it, and my language participates in the rhythms and calls of the 'natural' world before it can ever be set against them. (Watkin, 2015,177)

Ecomethexis is a concept borrowed from theatre denoting the breaking of the famous fourth wall and happens, according to Watkin and Serres, long before ecomimesis occurs and doesn't revolve around a subject mimicking an object. Instead, we could relate this to the foregoing discussion of affect, ethnography and movement. An important feature for me at this stage was then to see in my material what kind of subjectivities were made discernible. The challenge for any ethnographic endeavor is to succeed in giving voice to the subjects of the inquiry. The mere voice-giving is in itself to be seen as an enabling of different subjectivities. What seemed most challenging in the case of my own autoethnographical inquiry is rendering a place where other voices aren't drowned in the obvious noise from my own voice. In that way, I join the western scientific tradition, as described by Latour (1993), in that I claim to be a spokesperson for the mute objects of nature. But I also follow the tradition of the Athenian demagogue Demosthenes, who trained his voice by the sea with stones and the roaring surf as constraints. But while his voice and recitations addressed Athenian political human assemblies, my speech rather strives to translate a motley crowd of non-humans. Thus, the experiment aims at showing an intersection of natural science, social science and the humanities, where an 'instructed third' (Serres & Latour, 1995) could operate in a way that actualizes what Latour (1993) coins 'the parliament of things'.

The Experiment

Two years ago, I started gathering empirical data from running on revetments (Author, 2016). I was fixated on the idea that the human subjectivity mustn't be erased in the posthumanist equation. Experiences from this field have it that the complex set of actors constituting different assemblages or networks are often piled in what Bogost has coined 'Latour Lithanias' (2012). Revetments are thus composed of salt, different kinds of rocks, capsules, shattered glass-bottles, ferrets, bugs, sea-weed, driftwood, water, etc. However, such lists are only ecomimetic at best. They reveal nothing of the proximity of the intimacy of ethnography 'to be', as discussed above.

Instead, I set out to evoke the surroundings, to summon *their* story. By recording my continuous speech while running on revetments, I elaborated with an elevated, and let's say, inverted, ventriloquism in order to make the rocks talk. This could be seen as a poetic asset of the ethnographic repertoire. If we posed ourselves as the puppets rather than the masters, a more balanced relationship between the ventriloquist (the grand narrator) and the ventriloque (the babbling human) could be established that still would be in accordance with Serres's theory. Since ethnography lately has turned to new materialist and posthumanist theories, both of which strive to give voice to the non-human, the present project would be able to contribute to the discussion/creation by inquiring into the poetry of nature itself, rather than reproducing anthropocentric interpretations of it. My hypothesis was that utterances made during movement in rough terrain would be more sensible and proximate to non-human subjectivities, than words uttered while running on asphalt and tracks designed for it.

In *What I Talk About When I Talk About Running* (Murakami, 2009), the Japanese writer Haruki Murakami famously declares that 'I just run. I run in void. Or maybe I should put it the other way: I run in order to acquire a void.' (ibid., 23). This move(ment) partly resonates with the point of departure in my experiment, albeit with some decisive differences. The paraphrase on Murakami in the title of this essay neatly sums up the econarratological approach composed in the experiment (with the purpose of

exploring the narrative subjectivities of nature): *What I talk about when I am running*. Another important distinction from Murakami is that I'm not running to be emptied, but to be filled. I am, to borrow from the world of computation, imagining the running of Murakami as a silent 'defragmentation' of his 'system'. My running, on the other hand, is very different. Following the informational analogy, my running and talking are more like printing spam and junk mail.

Firstly, the smooth surfaces characteristic of marathon distances wouldn't do the trick. An even ground couldn't conjure away the human subjectivity as does the rocky crest of revetments. This became obvious in my recordings when I ran along the wooden quays between revetments (marked by the red arrows in the map accompanying the poem 'Non-human' noise below). A flat surrounding is the abode of the human subject, running and/or otherwise. (What below is referred to as *the subject*, i.e. one of the explored subjectivities in the experiment, is the denizen of this realm.) Secondly, I talk *while* I am running, not *about* running. Surely, it could be about running. The experiment welcomes all topics, given that we could say of them that they are non-intentional, haphazard, surroundings-dependent, and non-willed. Thus, the stories (and poems) produced by strenuous movement echo Watkin's description of econarrativity as something focusing the stories told *by* nature, rather than stories *about* it.

The experiment resulted in three forms of subjectivities (*subject*, *project*, and *interject*) which I analyzed with econarratological concepts. The *subject* was the babbling position ascribing meaning to things, uttering metaphors and trying to make tidy analyses. Also, the *subject* commented much upon passing people and associated with memories connected to the town and region. Other associations were made to the surroundings. In the commencing poem, one strophe is [cries of seagulls]. The *subject* directly reacted to this sound and projected it onto a dimension of meaning only accessible for a select few, namely those acquainted with Western popular culture of the 1980s.

Incredibly sweaty [cries of seagulls] on my head as well [panting]. You could tell that we are still by the water. The seagulls cry as in a monochrome power ballad of the 1980s. And when I say monochrome I mean those clouds passing by, super-fast, in, what the hell is it called? *Rumble Baby*, something like that, with him, Mickey Rourke. Was it him? Or was it, eh, someone else? I cannot recall who it was. Like, Nicholas Cage, or something. (160328)

While the explored subjectivity of the subject was occupied with arranging the story so that proper connections were made in order for the narrative account to be intelligible and with addressing an audience, the project was very different. This subjectivity emerged when intensity was raised in the displacement, such as when I was about to slip or when I could barely stop from falling into the water.

I have a bit smaller... a bit fewer clothes on me today. My Craft-function jacket with the university logo outermost. But still cool and grungy with ragged jeans, Fred perry-sho-o-ooooooooes. *Shit. Oh my god*, I am almost down in the water. Here begins... It is as if one could... (160331, Italicized words were uttered in English)

The *project* was the name I gave to the body in hazardous motion. While the word subject means 'thrown under', project denotes 'thrown across/through', which is exactly what characterized the quality of my body in motion during slippage and encounters with loose boulders. So while being a subjectivity in the extrapolation of my analysis, I understand the *project* as the position in econarratology, which Watkin (2015,177) furnishes as the 'irreducible and non-binary participation of the "subject" and "language" in the world they conspire to imitate'. Exclamations and elongated vowels, much like the abovementioned surfer journalist, were representative of this subjectivity. But I chose to construct the levels of subjectivities with an intermediate step between the one in proximation to nature (and its great story), the *project*, and the traditional humanist subject. From an econarratological perspective, it would be easy to argue that movement/displacement comes prior to speech. The *project* is a silent precursor to the babbling and self-obsessed *subject*. Between them, we find the soil where the first utterance is grown: the *interjection*.

And this... Wohhh! There is an abyss, like the *fall-out* of a skateboard arena. Not that I ever mastered the *fall-out*, but... Yes, that's right... Is it, woouch, the rocks that talk?

Are the interjections really the rocks punctuating my running, or? (160411, Italicized words were uttered in English)

The subjectivity of the *interject* was therefore related to the *project* and emerged when my utterances took *staccato*-form, as a direct response to the uneven surface. This kind of speech perhaps finds its relatives in the words of sports commentators and in those of game testers in the genre of 'Let's play'. In relation to econarratology, the *project* comes first, to paraphrase Watkin, to the party, with the *interject* right after. The *subject* is more inclined to ecomimesis, which is insignificant to econarratology.

In sum, the attempt to bridge the gap between the sciences and the humanities was made by designing a philosophical experiment aiming to expose the human subject to such challenges that it was forced to alter its relations with other subjectivities. By placing a human body in rough terrain in which it was set to run and by then recording its talk, uttered while running, the experiment detected other subjectivities which were held to not be the sole property of the human subject itself, but also of the surroundings. The experiment thus took place in an intersection of ethnography, posthumanism, and cultural geography. The subjectivities were furnished by analyzing the transcriptions of the talk with econarratological concepts. In what remains of the present essay, we will now turn to the question of poetry.

Revetment Poetry

Does poetry differ greatly from stories? There is no clear-cut line between the two, but one thing to be aware of is the layout. Prose is written in paragraphs, while poems are not. Poetry follows different metrics or else creates new ones. Condensation is characteristic of poetry, while clarity is often demanded of prose. All these traits are, of course, rules of thumb.

The four poems below have emerged from the utterances in the experiment. Everything in the transcriptions within [square brackets] is material for the poems. This was not an intentional move in the handling of the data of the experiment. Instead, square brackets were extracted for the sake of the present inquiry, in order to explore the poetry of revetments. This is not the same as saying that this is a repeatable method, although it can't be ruled out that it could be repeated. In the excerpt above about 1980s pop culture, there are, for instance, two square brackets: [cries of seagulls] and [panting]. Each square bracket was placed as a singular strophe in a poem in the order it appeared in the transcriptions. The only transformation was that they were translated into English from my mother tongue and that the brackets were removed.

The content of those brackets varied a lot, ranging from contextual descriptions, sounds from the surroundings, bodily noises, corrections, inaudible utterances, tone of voice and melody-descriptions. Each poem was named after one or several strophes in the poem (*Inaudible, Laughter & Sugary Sweet Perpetuum Mobile*), with the exception of the one at the beginning of the present essay, which is called '*Non-human*' noise. Choosing a more theoretically informed title for this one is a self-reflexive and self-critical move to remind me of my own cultural and social biases. To lump children's screams and Asian languages together with the cries of seagulls and motorcycles is a reminder of how one's own mother tongue is linked to the positions one has in the local/national cultural hierarchy relating to age, ethnicity, gender, etc. 'Human' is a category that is continuously made from cuts where other elements/actors automatically are consigned to the other side of the aisle, which, of course, doesn't mean that children and people speaking in Asian languages aren't human.

What appears in the poems is a motley choir of voices and noises: sounds from the body in motion; sounds from the surroundings; the sound from the recording device. But there is also present, in the third poem *Laughter*, the subjectivity of the transcription, a somewhat magisterial voice correcting, questioning and giving context to the running/talking subject, exclaiming strophes such as: *The day*

before yesterday; instead of on the rocks in the inner part of the bay; stimulated recall? All in all, the square brackets in the transcriptions function as so many peek- and peepholes in a wall, conveying condensed fragments of ethnographic moments. Speaking of subjectivities, the loci of the square brackets present a multiple and dynamic subject not fully adhering to either of the realms of nature or culture; a thousand tiny agoras topologically connected by the poetic method, and as such *fora* for a populace consisting of a plethora of heterogeneous subjects.

Each poem has a map on its right side. The first two maps were made from Google Maps screenshots. I added arrows on the second map to show where I ran and which distances were on dry land (red arrows), and which were on revetments (black arrows). The rest of the screenshots are from the application *RunKeeper*. From an econarratological perspective, the *RunKeeper* Screenshots are more interesting since they were generated automatically. In other words, they added a layer to the Great Narrative with little opportunity for me to corrupt it with an anthropocentric bias. Especially interesting in this regard, are the crude lines representing the distances I ran. The reason I find them curious, and also enhancing the poetic quality, is that the start and end points of the distances are placed in the blue fields representing the sea, and therefore, it seems, resonates with the idea of this project as an amphibian autobiography.

The poems have several anthropocentric biases. I wrote, produced and arranged the material and called them ‘poems’. Furthermore, I grouped them based on which session and day they were proclaimed, which might evince a narrative norm of linearity and finality which Serres deems as typical for humans convinced that they are the only ones capable of storytelling. As regards scope, content and form, they are inconsequential. But that doesn’t amount to saying that they are meaningless. Recall what Deleuze and Guattari termed a ‘haecceity’, i.e. the ‘just-this-ness’ of a situation or an event, which is pregnant with what it springs from.

What I find interesting, however, is that the four poems, other than displaying a maturation in the level of methodological confidence (less screech from the headset in the later poems, for instance), are reasonably homologous to Serres’s four stages that describe how human languages emerged from nature, i.e. were borne themselves.

A four-stage rocket launches the birth of language, the emergence of the ego and the dawn of narrative which, in telling their story, forms and creates them but forgets their origin: first it bursts from heat and white noise [*Inaudible*]; from this brouhaha to the first signals [*‘Non-human’ noise*]; then from these to feeble melodies [*Laughter & Sugary Sweet Perpetuum Mobile*]; finally from these to the first vowels [*Laughter & Sugary Sweet Perpetuum Mobile*]... Noise, call, song, music voice... come before the basic form of enunciation, before the language of story. (Serres in Watkins, 2015, 174-175 [brackets added])

These stages also resonate with the exploded view of the moving subjectivities that the experiment investigated and put on display: the *project*, *interject* and *subject*. Furthermore, the title of the very last poem appears as an adorable synonym to Sydnor’s ‘infinite ethnography to be’: a sugary-sweet perpetuum mobile.

Econarratological Poetry

Inaudible (160328)

Inaudible because of wind and headset -scrunch

pant

pant

Inaudible because of scrunch and wind

Inaudible because of scrunch and wind



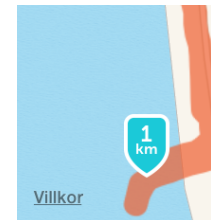
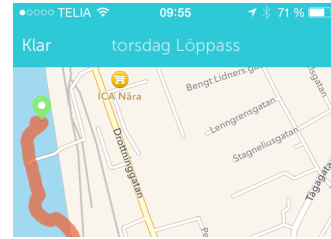
'Non-human' Noise (160328)

Wind vibrating like flaccid drumskin
Headset-creak
pant
sniff
Sound from train
delighted screams from children
puff, sigh
sigh, sniff
Wind vibrating like flaccid drumskin
Inaudible because of wind
sniff
sniff
inaudible
sniff
pant
gives a laugh
pitch goes up
Sound from motorcycle
stumbles
pitch goes up
sniff
sigh
sound from putative Asian language; a
man and a woman sit on the fixed sun loungers
stark noise from waves
inaudible
laughter
laughter
pant
pant
pant
pant
sniff
inaudible
cries of seagulls
panting
Breathing heavily for a few seconds



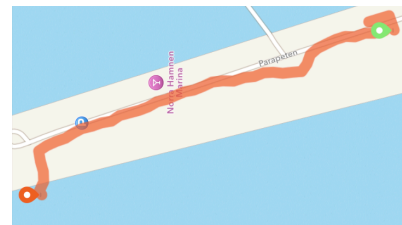
Laughter (160331)

Breathing heavily
 the day before yesterday
 instead of on the rocks in the inner part of the bay
stimulated recall?
 the day before yesterday
 panting for 11 seconds
 laughter
Runkeeper starts to talk in the headset
 panting
 panting, *runkeeper* is mumbling in the background
 panting
 panting and sniffing



Sugary-sweet perpetuum mobile (160411)

sings the perpetuum mobile-melody by Michael B. Tretow
 sugary sweet voice
 pants for several seconds
 sugary sweet voice



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